

## **The Church Pays Due Honor to the Blessed Virgin Mary**

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*(Reprinted from the "Advocate")*

**T**HAT the Church pays great honor to the Blessed Virgin Mary no one will question. So true is this that, so far from having to defend that the honor she pays is sufficient, the practical question for Catholics is to show that the honor paid to her is not excessive. For they are sometimes accused of paying her the honor that is due to God alone. Now, anyone familiar with Catholic doctrine will understand that there is no question of putting Mary in the place of God, and of giving her that honor which is reserved for Divinity. For, in the first place, all Catholics admit that Mary is a mere creature, that her existence and her preservation in existence are solely due to the creative act of God, Who drew her out of nothingness.

Catholics reverence Mary as the Mother of God, but this reverence has its origin and root in their reverence for God. Catholics reverence Mary on account of her Immaculate Conception, but this great privilege is hers not through any merits of her own, but through the foreseen merits of her Divine Son. Christ is Mary's Redeemer as much as—nay, even more than—He is ours. Catholics reverence Mary as full of grace, but grace is a gratuitous gift of God. If abundant graces were showered on Mary, it was in view of the sublime dignity to which God raised her.

Catholics will be the first to acknowledge the dependence of Mary on the goodness and mercy of God. They know that Mary herself was the first to acknowledge it. Nay, they know that her acknowledgment of such dependence was that disposition of soul which made her so pleasing to the Almighty. "He that is mighty hath done

great things for me. For He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid."

### HONOR PAID TO MARY EXCESSIVE?

Assuming, then, that Catholics do not pay to Mary the honor due to God alone, we come to the further question: "Is the honor which Catholics pay to Mary, at any rate, excessive?" This is the main practical issue before us tonight. The point which we shall venture to establish, first of all, is this—that were the Catholic Church to show less honor to Mary, were she to place Mary in any less exalted pinnacle of glory than she does, she would do so at the risk of sacrificing the majority of her own most fundamental doctrines.

Now, we affirm that in the Church's doctrine in regard to Mary we find a summary and a symbol of the Church's message to mankind. The fundamental doctrine of the Church is that Christ is the Son of God. Deny the Divine maternity of Mary and you at once call in question the personal union between the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity and the humanity of Christ.

The Church teaches that Mary was conceived without original sin, and regards this privilege of hers as unique. Thus, by contrast, she insinuates another most fundamental doctrine—the doctrine of the Fall of our first parents in the Garden of Eden as affecting all the descendants of Adam.

But the Church further teaches that this privilege of Mary's was due not to her own merits but to the foreseen merits of her Divine Son. In other words, the Church insinuates the whole doctrine of Redemption as necessary not only for Mary, but also for us. In insinuating the doctrine of the Redemption, the Church also insinuates her whole doctrine in regard to the forgiveness of sin, whether original or actual. For the necessity of Redemption implies that no creature could offer to God adequate satisfaction for sin, and that only a Divine Person could do so.

### AN EXCEPTION TO THE FALL OF MAN

Again, in teaching the Immaculate Conception of Mary the Church brings before us the dignity in which man was

created, the dignity from which he fell, and the dignity to which he has been restored through the merits of Christ. For Mary came forth from the hands of the Creator, her soul clothed with a Divine beauty far superior to that in which Adam's soul was created. She is the one exception to the Fall of Man, and she is the greatest triumph of Christ's work as the Redeemer.

Lastly, the Church teaches that Mary's intercessory power with God is unlimited. But she thus insinuates her whole doctrine in regard to prayers, and, in relying on her intercession for us, she further insinuates her doctrine of the Communion of Saint, or the dependence of souls one on another through merit and prayer, which again leads to the doctrine of St. Paul, that we are all members of one Body, the Mystical Body of Christ. We thus see that from the point of view of doctrine the honor which the Church pays Mary is inseparably connected with the most fundamental tenets of her teaching. But one may urge that the exposition of this connection between the Church's doctrine and devotion to Mary does not explain that tender, filial dependence of the Church's children on Mary, which may be justly compared to the dependence of a child on its mother, and which to many of those outside the Church seems excessive. It is true that to the average Catholic the honor paid to Mary is that of a child to its mother. It is a Catholic instinct. As is said, Catholics drink in devotion to Mary as a child drinks its mother's milk. This is coming to the root of things, and what we have to do is to furnish to the educated Catholic an intellectual explanation of a fact so indisputable.

#### THE CATHOLIC ATTITUDE

Many a Catholic in his devotion to Mary feels and thinks and acts in ways for which he can give no intellectual explanation, no more than he can explain his attitude to his mother. But there is an intellectual explanation of his attitude to his mother. A mother gives her child existence, nourishment, ministers to its growth and development, surrounds it with affection and tenderness, understands its weaknesses and its frailties, protects and shields it from its enemies. This she does for a long period before the child is conscious of such attentions, but

when it comes to the use of reason it comes to consider its mother as the source of all that is good and tender and sweet in life; and when the day comes when death has placed that loved one in the grave, it realizes that the center of the world is gone, and that the world can never be the same again. If one were to ask the child or even the man of his devotion to his mother were excessive, he would be bewildered. If the child were to understand that his loyalty to God was called in question, he would answer that God, of course, was the first object of his devotion, but with that limitation he would answer that he could imagine no better way of being loyal to God than through devotion to his mother. But, in truth, his first impulse would be to wonder if his interrogator ever experienced a mother's love.

#### MOTHER OF MERCY

Now, this is the attitude of the normal Catholic towards those who accuse him of having excessive devotion to Mary. How, then, can we explain why the devotion of Catholics can only be compared to the devotion of a grateful child to its mother?

The fact of primary importance to the average Catholic is that he has an immortal soul. That fact is as real to him as that he has a material body. Secondly, he has a vivid realization that though his soul is immortal, still it can in a certain sense die—that is, by grave sin it can lose Divine favor. If the soul is separated from the body by death without repenting of that sin, he knows that he will have to face an angry God, and be hurled from the Divine Presence into a place of eternal torments. On the other hand, he knows that, while the soul is united to the body, it has its pains, its diseases, its difficulties, its perils, its trials. Now, the Catholic Church teaches him that what his mother is or has been for the care and nourishment, protection and development of his body, so Mary is for the care, nourishment, protection and development of his immortal soul.

The Church teaches him to turn to Mary in all his spiritual and, indeed, physical difficulties, and to his consolation and comfort he finds that Mary is indeed to his soul what his mother is or has been to his body. He feels the same tenderness and affection, the same sympathetic

knowledge of his weakness and frailties, the same compassion and encouragement in his falls. In a word, he finds Mary a true mother and a mother of mercy. But this does not explain why it is that the Church does teach this consoling doctrine, or whence this doctrine originates. For that purpose we must review the history of the Church, and, indeed, of mankind.

### THE FALL OF MAN

For, indeed, to explain this, and to view the position of Mary in its true perspective in the history of the Church, we have to go back to the very beginning of human history. In the beginning God created angels and men in the state of sanctifying grace—that is to say, they were created possessed of a supernatural gift by which (if they passed successfully through a period of probation) they were destined to share in that happiness which God Himself enjoys. Many of the angels failed in their probation and were hurled into Hell. Our first parents failed. They were not hurled into Hell, but fell from their supernatural elevation, a penalty which extended to their descendants. But God did not leave mankind without hope of restoration to their primitive dignity and destiny. For He said to the Evil Spirit who tempted Eve, "I will place enmities between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed, and her seed will crush thy head." We see, then, that a "woman" is, according to the Divine plan, to play an essential part in lifting man from his degradation and restoring him to Divine favor. But this restoration was not to take place without adequate reparation being offered to God for the indignity offered Him by sin. God Himself alone could offer this adequate reparation. Hence, God Himself, in the fulness of time, sent His Only Begotten into the world to become man, to redeem the world by the sacrifice on Calvary. But before God became man, before the Word was made flesh, we have to notice a wonderful manifestation of God's condescending love. He made man free, and He would not offer violence to this freedom even in order to redeem the world. Hence, He did not will to become man until He had secured the free consent of the Woman whom He had chosen to be His Mother. The freedom with which

that Woman gave her consent is clearly described for us in the Gospel of St. Luke.

#### MARY'S FREE CONSENT

When we read of the Fall of our first parents, and reflect on the consequences of this sin, we realize to some degree their terrible responsibility. But who can measure the responsibility of Mary when for a moment the eternal destinies of mankind rested on the shoulders of this young Jewish maiden? For there is no doubt that Mary was perfectly free to refuse to become the Mother of God. But if she had resisted the eternal decree of her selection, God would not have become man, there would have been no Jesus of Nazareth, no Sacrifice of the Cross, no Resurrection, no coming of the Holy Ghost, no Sacraments of Baptism or Penance, no Blessed Sacrament, no abiding consolation for us in life, no vision of God after death, in a word, no Catholic Church to teach, to console, to forgive. Who can tell with what pleasure God looked down on Mary as she uttered the words signifying her consent to become His Mother and thus enable Him to achieve that work of redeeming and saving human souls—a work for which He was prepared to suffer so much. And how can the Church be accused of showing excessive devotion to Mary, seeing that to her she is indebted for her very existence? Jesus Christ is the life of the Church, but without Mary's free consent He would not have come.

#### DEPENDENCE ON MARY

But this dependence of the Son of God on Mary did not end with His Conception, nay, it only began. During the days of His infancy, His childhood and boyhood, He was dependent on Mary for His nurture, His development, and for His very safety. Nay, He was dependent on Mary far beyond the normal period of ordinary children. All that we know of the long years of His hidden life up to His thirtieth year is summed up in the Gospel by the words, "He was subject to them." The first miracle of His public life was wrought in answer to her prayer. And when the work of our Redemption was about to be completed Mary again comes forward on the scene. "For

there stood by the cross of Jesus Mary, His Mother." The physical miracles of the Saviour have always had their spiritual significance for us, and thus the physical dependence of Jesus on Mary would justify us in attaching to it a spiritual significance for the guidance of our souls. But Our Saviour leaves us in no doubt in this matter. In the last words addressed to mankind from the Cross in His dying commission He explicitly ordains that we should look upon Mary as our Mother, and that she should cherish us as a mother cherishes her children, "Son, behold thy mother. Woman, behold thy son."

### THE PROTECTING LOVE OF MARY

Can the Church then be blamed in teaching her children to look upon and to love Mary as a mother? Is it an extravagant excrescence of Christianity to recommend us to put into practice the dying wish of Christ on the Cross? Yet, even were the Church to neglect this wish of Our Saviour's, it is not likely that Mary would do so. As a mother loves her children before they learn to love her, so Mary has loved men as a mother even before they have learned to understand and appreciate her maternal love. For the protecting love of Mary for the Church is manifest down the ages. In every crisis of the Church's history this protection has been so evident that the Church, in her liturgy, does not hesitate to address her with the words—"Thou alone hast crushed all heresies."

Take up the literature of prayers which the Church suggests for the use of the faithful. Investigate what prayers appeal most strongly to their hearts. You will find that they are the prayers that sing the praises of Mary or those that inspire confidence in her. What prayer is more popular than the Litany of Loreto, wherein the faithful salute her as the Virgin most prudent, most renowned, most powerful, most merciful, and most faithful? She is the cause of our joy, the Gate of Heaven, Health of the weak, Refuge of sinners, Comfortress of the afflicted, and Help of Christians. She is preeminently the Queen—the Queen of Angels, Queen of Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins, and, indeed, of all Saints. Then, too, they love to recite the "Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope."

They appeal to her as the banished children of Eve, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears, and ask her to turn her eyes of mercy towards them, and then as most clement, most loving, most sweet, they beg of her to crown her protection of them in this life by showing to them after death the blessed fruit of her womb. Then, again, no devotion is more popular than that of the Rosary, wherein the faithful never tire of saluting Mary with the words used by the Archangel and St. Elizabeth: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with Thee and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." Having thus awakened in Mary the sweet memory of that great crisis in the history of our Redemption, they appeal to her by her Divine maternity to pray for us sinners at the two all-important moments—now and at the hour of death. But it was left to St. Bernard to give full expression to that feeling of tender filial confidence which the Catholic heart cherishes towards Mary; and how accurately he interpreted that feeling may be judged by the popularity of his prayer, the "Memorare."

To sum up, then, the results of our inquiry on the Catholic attitude to Mary, we say that it is that of a child towards its mother. We assert that if this is regarded as extravagant or excessive, there is solid justification for such extravagances or excess. The Church is justified, seeing that she is indebted for her existence to the free consent of Mary to cooperate with God in the work of our Redemption. The example of Christ's dependence on Mary justifies it. The obligation of Mary and of all Christians to obey the dying command of Christ justifies it. The protection of Mary over the Church, and the confidence of the Faithful in her, is but the realization and the fulfilment of that command.

#### MARY'S INFLUENCE ON WOMAN

It ought not to be difficult to estimate the influence of Mary on the history of mankind as a consequence of this doctrine. Tonight we are only concerned with her influence on woman. It will be unnecessary to enlarge upon the influence which a good mother has upon her child. Mankind gives expression to universal experience when it sums up what has been said on this point in one brief



sentence, "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world."

But it is universally admitted that this maternal influence is found in its highest degree in the case of a mother's influence on her daughters. Who, then, can estimate the influence of such a Mother as Mary on the women of the world? In every phase of her life they will find one who will offer them the most sublime example joined to a most sympathetic interest in their peculiar trials, difficulties and sorrows. The little ones will be attracted to the service of God when they read that her childhood was spent in the Temple. Maidens will treasure her example and her prudence when they find that she was alarmed at the approach of an archangel, alarmed for that virginity which she had vowed to God. Married women will find her life full of practical lessons in her fidelity to her husband, a fidelity unchanged by the terrible suspicion which God allowed to enter into the heart of Joseph. Widows will find in her a sympathetic friend who has known the long years of waiting, of weary waiting, till God called her to be united forever to him whom He had made her partner in life. But, above all, it is to mothers that her life will make the strongest appeal. For, after all, what is a mother's life but her son's life? No woman ever knew the trials of a mother's love as Mary did. But stay. Is there one type of woman excluded from her motherly sympathy, one type which even women themselves are tempted to disown? Will Mary pull aside her garments lest they be polluted by contact with the Magdalens of the world? Will she shrink from the touch of her who knelt at the feet of her Divine Son in the house of Simon the Pharisee? The Gospels give the answer. There is a woman mentioned therein whom the Pharisees would have stoned. But there is also mention of one to whom, but for a heavenly vision, Joseph would have given a bill of private divorce. The shame of injured innocence must have drawn the heart of Mary to those whose shame was not without guilt, and when guilty shame gave place to shame repented of and forgiven, it drew together two hearts seemingly so far apart, and they met at the foot of the Cross—Mary the immaculate one and Mary the sinner in the city. "For there stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary, His Mother, and Mary of Magdala."

What a consolation, then, the thought of Mary brings to the woman of the world? But her influence is not merely consoling, it is uplifting. For this is the special secret of her influence—to find in one and the same person sweetness, gentleness, sympathy, compassion and mercy united to the practice of the most sublime virtue. For the modesty so befitting a woman finds in her its highest ideal; heroic devotion, unswerving faith, purest love find their truest home in the heart of Mary. It is there that the Monicas and the Magdalens of the world find their strength as well as their consolation. It is there that (inspired by her example) countless multitudes of virgins find strength to consecrate their lives to the service of her Divine Son. Uninspired by her example and unassisted by her prayers, what is the history of woman in the world but a history of shame and degradation? But the Church, faithful to the Spirit of her Divine Founder, has ever taught that woman has a higher calling in life than to be a plaything for the indulgence of human passions. Peter and the other Apostles have their high offices to fulfil, but when they fail, and flee from the sight of the uplifted Cross, the women from Galilee are staunch in their love. And they are heartened in their adventurous loyalty by the figure of her who is standing at the foot of the Cross.

If, then, at any time foolish men accuse the Church of paying excessive honor to Mary, if they would wish to rescue the Divine Child from the arms of His Mother, they will ever find the Church adamant in its opposition. The Church has too much respect for the mothers of the world. If foolish men should wish to depict John standing as a solitary figure at the foot of the Cross, the Church will ever protest against this falsification of history. The Church has too much respect for the loyalty of women.

## Mary, Mother of God, Almoner of Grace

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WHILE it is true that the dignity and position of Our Blessed Lady were recognized and acknowledged by the Church from the beginning, it is also true that, with the passing of time, her place in the economy of Redemption has been more explicitly defined. She is the Queen who stands beside her Divine Son in gilded clothing, her heel upon the serpent's head, the crown of virginal motherhood upon her brow. But through the ages the Church has ever loved to add fresh jewels to Our Lady's diadem, and, by doing so, show honor to her "whom God first hath honored." The Catholic world awaits the solemn definition of the doctrine of Our Lady's Assumption into heaven, and, while awaiting this definition, petitions the Vicar of her Son to proclaim the Mother to be Mediatrix of Divine grace. Saints and theologians have taught more or less explicitly that all grace comes from God to man through the Mother of God. In our days this doctrine is taught with still greater definiteness. What is the exact purport of this teaching?

### OUR BLESSED MOTHER'S MEDIATION

The position occupied by Our Blessed Lady is unique; so also is her dignity, so also is her power. She was the chosen, predestined Mother of God, not merely for the time when "the Word made Flesh" lived with her life, or during the years of infancy and childhood only. She was His Mother during His whole life; she is His Mother for eternity. In becoming the Mother of God, Our Lady received rights and privileges. She has not lost or forfeited them. They still belong to her. Because she is Mother of the Redeemer of the human race she is its co-re-

dempstress. Because she is Mother of the Divine Mediator she is the mediatrix. Our Lady stood at the foot of the Cross, but not as an outsider to the Sacrifice, not simply as a mother suffering with and sorrowing for her Son; she had an active part in the sacrifice. When she said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to Thy word," she expressed her submission to God's will for every moment of her life and for every demand He made upon her. Hence it is that she not only accepted the Sacrifice of Calvary, but willed it, because it was God's will. She did not suffer less in consequence of her perfect submission. The sevenfold sword pierced her soul, but her sorrows revealed the perfect union which existed between her will and God's will. This union of will was the outcome of charity. After Our Divine Lord, no human being loved God so utterly, so intensely, so exclusively, as His Mother.

It is the teaching of theology that "the greater the charity, the greater the union with God, and the more perfect this union the more powerful and efficacious are the prayers and assistance of the person who loves God so fully." We give the words of St. Thomas of Aquino: "The more perfect the charity of the saints in heaven the more do they pray for wayfarers on earth, whom their prayers can assist; and the more intensely the saints are united to God the greater is the efficacy of their prayers." Our Lady's love of God even on earth was as unique as herself. It was incomparably greater than that of any angel or saint, and, according to some theologians, it was greater than the love of all the angels and saints together. When "the Word was made Flesh" in her womb she was "established in sanctity," to use the expression of St. Thomas, and sanctity means union with God. Even on earth, therefore, Our Lady's prayer was supremely efficacious, of such value and power that St. Peter Damian says she came to "the altar of man's reconciliation not as one who implores, but as one who commands, not as a servant, but as a queen."

It is asserted, of course, by non-Catholics that Our Divine Lord is the only Mediator, and every attempt to substitute any other mediation in place of His, as the Catholic Church does, is simply to make little of the intercessory power and mediation of Christ. But the Cath-

olic Church teaches, and has always taught, that Our Lord is the sole sufficient, because the only necessary, Mediator, and has never attempted to substitute any other mediation for His. Therefore, in appealing to the intercession and mediation of His Blessed Mother, the Church does not make little of the mediation of her Divine Son. Necessary and absolute mediation does not exclude subordinate mediation; if it did, prayer for others would be inadmissible, because it would be wrong, since such prayer is mediation. Such prayer is inculcated both in the Old and New Law, and St. Paul writes to the Romans: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, *through* our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the charity of the Holy Ghost, that you help me in your prayers for me to God" (xv, 30). We have stressed the word "through" in the above sentence as it gives the explanation of all subordinate mediation. Christ's mediation is essential and absolute, but because His merits are so immeasurably great they flow into and uplift the mediation of others to a position and power unattainable by any other mediator of himself and render his mediation efficacious. Most persons lose sight of the truth that there is real solidarity between Our Divine Lord and the members of His Mystical Body; that the whole Christ, as St. Augustine puts it, is composed of the Head and members; the Head being the only begotten Son of God, the members, those who have been redeemed by Him and incorporated with Him. His merits, virtues, and grace are communicated to each member of His Mystical Body as the life-giving sap flows from the vine into the branches. It is this which renders each member of this body worthy in the sight of God, and gives power and efficacy to his prayers and intercession. This power and efficacy is great according to the degree of charity which each member possesses. The greater the charity, the greater is the saint, and, consequently, the greater his or her power before God.

We are now in a position to understand the meaning and value of Our Lady's mediation. It is subordinated to that of her Divine Son, receives its efficacy from and through Him, but because Our Blessed Lady's charity eclipsed that of angels and saints is her mediation so marvellously great as to be practically irresistible. The late Pope Leo XIII puts this intercession and mediation of the Mother of God very clearly before us when he writes:

When the Eternal Son of God willed to assume the nature of man for man's redemption, and by this means to contract mystical espousals with the human race, He did not carry out His will until He had just received the free consent of her He had chosen to be His Mother, and who was the representative of the whole human race according to the famous and most true pronouncement of St. Thomas of Aquino: "By the Annunciation the consent of the Virgin was awaited in the name and in the stead of all humanity." Hence it is legitimate to affirm with all truth that nothing from the immense treasury of grace which belongs to Christ is communicated to us except through the intercession of Mary, for so has God decreed. Thus, as no one can come to the Father except by the Son, no one can come to Christ except by Mary.

In his Encyclical Letter for the Jubilee of the Immaculate Conception, Pius X stated that: "There is no more powerful means of bringing mankind to Jesus Christ than His Virgin Mother. . . . She has merited appositely (*de congruo*) what Christ has merited by right (*de condigno*), and hence she is the first helper (*prima ministra*) in the distribution of grace." Benedict XV crowned the teaching of his predecessors by instituting the Feast of "Mary, Mediatrix of Grace."

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF MEDIATION

There are four chief characteristics of intercessory power or mediation: universality, efficacy, readiness to mediate, and perpetuity of intercession. These qualities are to be found in the mediation of every saint. They are found in an extraordinary degree in the mediation of Our Blessed Lady. No one, however wicked, is excluded from the mediation of Our Lady. St. Bernard reminds us of this in his beautiful "Memorare": "It has *never* been heard in *any* age that *anyone* who had recourse to thee was left unheard." The Church addresses the Mother of God in the Office in these words: "Holy Mary, succor the miserable, help the faint-hearted, comfort the sorrowing, pray for the people, plead for the clergy, make intercession for the devout female sex." This prayer includes all and each; no one is left out. It is the Church's constant reminder of the universality of Our Lady's mediation, of which St. Thomas says:

The Blessed Virgin is "full of grace," not only for herself, but as regards its distribution amongst us. It is a wonderful thing for a saint to possess grace that is sufficient for the salva-

tion of many souls, but most wonderful is it to have such a fund of grace that it suffices for the salvation of all, and this is the privilege of Christ and the Blessed Virgin. In every danger we may obtain salvation from this glorious Virgin, as we can obtain assistance from her for the performance of every virtuous deed.

And Our Lady's intercession is infallibly efficacious, so efficacious, indeed, that some of the Fathers call her the all-powerful suppliant, for it is the mediation of a mother for her children at the throne of her Son. Dante knew how supremely powerful was Our Lady's intercession, and in the *Paradiso* he simply puts theological teaching on the subject into his own incomparable verse when he says:

Lady, thou art so great and of such might,  
That he who seeks grace yet turns not to thee,  
Would have his prayer, all wingless, take its flight.

It is hardly necessary to speak of the readiness of Our Blessed Lady to intercede for us.

In the same canto of the *Paradiso* Dante again says:

Not only doth thy kind benignity  
Give help to him who asks, but many a time  
Doth it prevent the prayer in bounty free.

"Prevent the prayer" means to forestall the request. It is the mother's privilege which she uses for each of us as once she used it at Cana of Galilee. She would not be the mother of men if she were not anxious and eager for their salvation, to win which her Divine Son lived and died. His overwhelming love of each of us sent Him to His death on the Cross. His Mother's love of us makes her importunate in pleading for us and ever ready to hasten to our assistance, precisely because she is His Mother before she became our Mother.

This importunity and readiness of Our Lady to help us is unceasing, and will continue until time is no more and the full number of the elect is complete. Then, but only then, will God's Mother cease to be in travail with those other children of adoption who must be "made conformable to the image" of her Son before they can be admitted into His Kingdom. As long as there is a human being on earth, a human soul to be saved, Our Lady's mediation must continue. Other saints are raised up by God at different periods of time to bring those of their time back to the feet of Jesus Christ. St. Benedict, St.

Dominic, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatius Loyola, were sent by God at particular periods as mediators, pleaders for mankind. In our own day we are witnesses of the wonders wrought by the Little Flower of Jesus, who, by the winsomeness of her childlike simplicity has verified the prophecy: "A little child shall lead" men back to God. These saints carry out the work for which God has created them. They have their day, and then, their purpose fulfilled, the time of fulfilment past, they seem to be lost in the bosom of God. It is not thus with the Mother of God. Her day is not yet ended. Her purpose not yet fulfilled. Down through the centuries each day has heard the prayer go forth to her from all nations and in every tongue: "Pray for *us* sinners *now*"; and this continual prayer tells us that Our Blessed Lady's mediation and intercession is perpetual. In his letter to Dr. Pusey, Cardinal Newman says:

I consider it impossible then, for those who believe the Church to be one vast body in heaven and on earth, in which every holy creature of God has his place, and of which prayer is the life, when once they recognize the sanctity and dignity of the Blessed Virgin, not to perceive immediately that her office above is one of perpetual intercession for the faithful militant, and that our very relation to her must be that of clients to a patron, and that, in the eternal enmity which exists between the woman and the serpent, while the serpent's strength lies in being the tempter, the weapon of the second Eve and Mother of God is prayer.

#### RECOURSE TO MARY

It is for us to build upon these solid foundations, and to "go with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid" through her who is Mother of Divine Grace, the mediatrix of all grace, God's Mother and our own. Her power is now what it has always been. Her intercession is supremely efficacious, for, in the words of St. Antonino of Florence, "The prayer of the Mother of God is noblest of all, because it is, as it were, the prayer of one who commands and rules as a queen and a mother, so that it is impossible her prayer should not be heard."



## The Morning Star

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HOW calm and serene she floats on the heaving bosom of the ocean! How gently she parts, as with trembling fingers, the curtains of the twilight! How mildly she sparkles on the skirts of the blushing dawn! How brightly she flames on the grey mists that cradle the newborn day! How tenderly she unloosens the fetters that bind all living creatures in the torpor of sleep, and summons them from dreamland to the work and cares of the day!

For long watches the night has dragged her weary hours, and clasped in her dead embrace a benumbed world. Long has the blast raged through a thunderous sky, over the roaring seas, the wailing forests, the flooded countryside. It has sown with wrecks the desolate shore, and filled with moanings the homes of the bereaved. But at last the dense wall of cloud has split asunder, and through the fitful rift the morning star has shed her kindly radiance on the scene of riot, turmoil, and desolation.

On his storm-tossed boat, after the stress of a deadly struggle, the sailor has caught the rays flickering through the broken rack, and known that the tempest has spent its fury. Adrift on the pathless deserts the traveler has sighted afar off the tremulous glimmer, and with renewed confidence turned his steps towards home. Aslant through the dusky casements the genial ray has threaded its way to the eyes of the sick man, on his bed of anguish, and poured comfort into his depressed heart.

How gracious and queenly her progress as she glides on her upward course along the blue ethereal arch that curves into infinity! Roses spring full-blown beneath her feet, silver mists and strips of pale azure join to make the folds of her queenly mantle.

How solemn and mysterious is the short moment when, between the hush of the night and the awakening of the day, the little star has the world all to herself to exert her sway, and to rain her spells upon it. At her bidding, it seems as if a new creation were rising out of the old chaos, as if the earth shook off the dark shroud in which it has lain cold and dumb, and were re-born to the flush and glow of its first youth.

But at no small cost to herself does the wondrous star pour her bounty all around. Out of her own substance does she fill all the others. With the growth of daylight she wastes away; yet not before she has excelled herself, and, by her masterpiece, crowned all her past works, does she leave the stage. What a gorgeous train of gold, scarlet and purple does she spread in her wake for the king of the day to follow. And now that she has fulfilled her mission she is content to meet her fate, consumed in the fires she has kindled.

#### MARY THE MORNING STAR

The Christian heart, who, with the prophet, keeps the watches of the early morning in prayer and meditation, has also caught the glimpse of the star, and it has sent his thoughts flying over the wonders of the natural order to the glories of the supernatural creation. He knows that there is another Sun to irradiate this new world, for the Incarnate Word is the Light that illuminates all the children of the Divine adoption; and he remembers that there was another Star of the Morning to open the way and herald the coming of the Sun of souls. How fair and fresh she breaks amid the shadows of night, on the day of her nativity! For long ages, ever since the Fall of our first parents, had lasted the dark night, when all the nations were sitting in the shadow of death, and all the light of heaven had been quenched by the rank exhalations rising from the foul corruption prevailing over the world. But from beyond the somber vault a genial ray has pierced the enfolding gloom. Many a faithful soul, waiting for the redemption of Israel, has descried the faint glimmer, and in a burst of joy greeted the Star of the new morn with the words of the prophecy, which the Church repeats on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Mother:

"Who is she who cometh forth as the rising dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun?" Who is she, who, born of a sinful and corrupt race, is all fair and stainless, all clothed in light, all steeped in grace, all pleasing to the Almighty Creator—that beauteous Star of enchantment and transporting joy, rising on the ruins and desolation of a shattered world? With outstretched arms, with exulting hearts, we acclaim thee, who bringest with thee the primeval blessing that shall wipe away the old curse and restore to men their forfeited destiny.

Scarcely had our Morning Star pierced the pall of gloom with her faint ray, scarcely had the pure heart of the Immaculate Virgin stirred in her first throb of love and adoration, when a shout of joy ran through the angelic choirs, and a tidal wave rose from the depth of the ever-blessed Trinity and swept all creation. For, in the first sparkle of the Star, as she rises above the skyline, we can already read the most cheering message that was ever conveyed from Heaven to earth, that the time is coming for the great promise of God to be fulfilled; for the oracles of the holy prophets to be made true; that the fulness of time is at hand when the Almighty Creator will repair the break made in His work by sin; that the night is passing away that had so long preyed on mankind; that the old dispensation of justice and fear will soon be set aside to make room for the waters of love and mercy to flood the redeemed world. Following close on the steps of His gracious herald do we not descry the first glimmerings of the Eternal Sun: "As a bridegroom coming out of his bridal chamber, rejoicing as a giant to run his course," on His march towards the meridian, the noonday, when He shall drop the veil that covers His face, in the day that shall know no setting, but pass from light to light till it bursts into the glory of eternity.

For the Church, as well as her Divine Founder, the Blessed Mother is the Morning Star, and receives no more than her due when she is greeted with the title. To the Church our Lord has left the inheritance both of His power and His mission, and He did not depart from His practice when He provided her with the assistance of the one who had stood by Him in all the discharge of His redeeming office. Ever since she was launched on the foul flood of the pagan world, the faithful Star has shone on

the Ark of the New Testament and guided her safely amid all her fortunes. On perilous seas, under threatening skies, with murderous rocks ahead, amid the treachery of thick fogs, with the great dragon prowling in the depths, searching for its quarry, the frail bark of the Fisherman has steered her course, freighted with all the treasures of Heaven, the revealed truths of Faith, the dispensation of the Precious Blood, the great Sacrifice of propitiation, and the souls entrusted to her keeping. Yet for over nineteen centuries she has kept afloat, setting at defiance all the passions of men and the gates of Hell. For through whatever thickness of stormcloud, and fury of blustering seas, her lodestar has never failed her, tracing a path of light amid the black, restless waves. And now that, more than ever, fierce onsets are hurled by impiety and unbelief against the true Church of Christ, the more she fastens her look on the guiding Star, the more she anchors her hopes on the Tower of David, and with her war song on her lips: "Who is she that cometh forth as a morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array," she goes to battle, sure that the Morning Star will ever be the prophecy and promise of victory, of conquest and final triumph.

#### PLEDGE OF A SAFE JOURNEY

Again, in every soul traveling on her pilgrimage to her homeland, our Blessed Lady is the Morning Star that heralds a safe and prosperous journey amid all the hazards that beset her. Spiritual life, as well as the temporal one, is chequered by the most contrasting fortunes. It has its long spells of darkness in the starless night of infidelity, or in the twilight of sin, or in the mists of tepidity, and the soul sits in the deadly shadow, unable to rise and tread her way to the heights to which her conscience beckons her. But behold the Morning Star has broken through the darkness! From the frozen, chilled, or smouldering heart sparks fly out, of confidence, hope, prayer, to the Mother of Mercy, to the Refuge of Sinners, and soon sin rises to repentance, sloth to fervor, worldliness to generous love.